

Fact Sheet

May 2007

PANDEMIC INFLUENZA PLANNING IN NOAA

Maintaining Government During an Influenza Pandemic

In early 2006, President George W. Bush issued an Implementation Plan for the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza – a document which directed each Federal department and agency to develop a comprehensive preparedness plan in the event of an outbreak of pandemic influenza in the United States.

People accomplish the mission of NOAA, and a potential pandemic influenza outbreak may compromise NOAA's ability to accomplish its mission. Therefore, NOAA, with guidance from the Department of Commerce, is developing plans and strategies to ensure its essential operations are uninterrupted should an influenza pandemic occur with the potential human capital implications. If a pandemic influenza outbreak spreads, NOAA employees and contractors may be infected or exposed. Their families may be affected, and their options for getting to work may be limited. There may also be a need to limit potential exposure. Many employees and their supervisors will have questions about their rights, entitlements, alternative work arrangements, benefits, leave and pay flexibilities, and hiring flexibilities available during the turmoil created by the pandemic.

A NOAA Pandemic Influenza Annex to the NOAA Continuity of Operations Plan is under development and is scheduled for release in Summer, 2007. Additional information for employees will be updated on the Homeland Security Program Office website (www.homelandsecurity.noaa.gov) as it becomes available.

How Will a Pandemic Outbreak Affect Me and What Are My Work Options?

Pandemic influenza may cause you to be unable to work from your office, or you may have obligations outside the office because of a pandemic which might prevent you from going to work. This could be for any number of reasons. It could be that you, or close

family members, are ill or contagious. Or a decision may be made to reduce the potential for contact by recommending employees either recently sick, or in contact with those who were, remain home.

In the event of a pandemic, one way to slow the spread of disease is for people to decrease contact with each other, an approach known as "social distancing." Workplaces may provide opportunities for influenza to spread, so in the event of a severe pandemic, NOAA employees who are able to do so may be afforded an opportunity to telework from home and/or work an alternative schedule. In addition, some employees may be placed on Administrative Leave during periods of time to promote social distancing. You may need to request an alternative work schedule in situations where your time available to work is limited to periods when an alternative care provider is able to care for your family members.

The alternative work arrangements offered by NOAA are designed to assist you in balancing work and family responsibilities. Alternative work arrangements include flexible and compressed work schedules and telework arrangements. It is a good idea to explore these options in advance so you can make a smooth transition if necessary.

Maintain Good Health Habits

Healthy habits can protect everyone from getting germs or spreading germs at home, work, or school.

- **Avoid close contact.**
Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
- **Stay home when you are sick.**
If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.
- **Cover your mouth and nose.**
Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.
- **Clean your hands.**
Washing your hands often and for at least 15 to 20 seconds each time will help protect you from germs.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.**
Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.
- **Practice other good health habits.**
Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

For More Information:

www.pandemicflu.gov –One-stop access to U.S. Government avian and pandemic flu information. Managed by the Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For the latest information on recent outbreaks and avian flu facts.

www.cdc.gov –Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For the latest information on recent outbreaks and avian flu facts.

<http://www3.niaid.nih.gov/news/focuson/flu> –National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. Latest information on Pandemic Influenza research.

<http://www.ready.gov/america/beinformed/influenza.html> –Department of Homeland Security. National public service advertising campaign designed to educate and empower Americans to prepare for and respond to emergencies including natural disasters and potential terrorist attacks.

<http://www.opm.gov/pandemic/index.asp> –Office of Personnel Management. Policies on leave, pay, hiring, alternative work arrangements and other critical human capital issues in relation to pandemic influenza.

<http://www.homelandsecurity.noaa.gov> –NOAA’s Homeland Security Program Office website. Information on homeland security activities within NOAA including continuity of operations and pandemic planning and access to the Employee Check In Service for employee accountability during an incident.

<http://www.wfm.noaa.gov> –NOAA’s Office of Workforce Management’s website. Provides a wealth of information for NOAA’s most valuable asset – People.